Common Wisconsin Mouse Identification

Is the belly light colored or dark?

Dark

This is either the **house mouse** or one of several species of **meadow mouse.**

Hairless, scaley tail?

Yes

No

Dark with a hairy tale is one of many **meadow mice.**

Light

This is either a **woodland deer mouse** or a **white-footed mouse**. In Wisconsin, these are not usually a chronic indoor problem for infestation.

White-footed mouse.

House mouse:

The invasive house mouse is dull grayish brown to black color and has a uniformly colored, hairless tail. They are probably the most common in-house rodent. Where the outdoor mice will leave if given the opportunity, house mice, once established indoors with adequate food (crumbs, insects and trash will do), can quickly multiply and infest the premises.

Woodland Deer Mouse:

Colors range from pale gray to deep reddish brown, with a white belly and feet. The tail is roughly as long as its body and is bi-colored (dark above and white below). They may be found in woodsheds, woodpiles and sometimes cabins, because these areas provide shelter as well as ready access to the outdoors, their main habitat.

Use caution when decontaminating after an infestation. Ensure that the area is well-ventilated before removing a nest or sweeping up. Wear gloves and eye protection such as goggles; and, if a large amount of dust or droppings are present, wear a properly fitting respirator. Carefully, to disturb as little dust as possible, remove nesting material and seal it in plastic bags. Spray a water mist onto dusty surfaces, to minimize dust getting up into the air, before sweeping surfaces. By tracking their feet through unsanitary areas in the building, including their own excrement, mice can spread bacterium and viruses. Hanta virus has been found in some woodland deer mice.

Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
Agriculture Resource Management Division
P.O. Box 8911
Madison, WI 53708-8911
608-224-4500 IPM Program: 608-224-4547
ARM PUB 134A 9/2003

Mice

A mouse can fit through as little as a ¼ inch opening and needs no more than an ounce of food per week to survive. It will drink water if water is available, but can get all it needs from moist food. Unlike insects, mice are curious, excellent climbers, and enjoy a wide range of flavors to please their tiny palates. So, they forage - scavenging crumbs on floors, oils off kitchen surfaces, and goodies from the trash. Mice can chew wood, wiring and insulation and will drop up to 40 fecal pellets a day. Mice can spread bacterium such as salmonella and e. coli by walking through feces and urine then transferring the microbes from their bodies to uncleaned areas.

If one or two mice find their way into your building, especially during autumn or spring, it is likely not a health or safety problem. Wisconsin has many species of outdoor mice that are often grouped under the term "field mouse". "Field mice" do not prefer to live in buildings and their normal food source is outdoors. They may wander in if given an opening. On the other hand, a true infestation, a problem with an abundance of mice residing and breeding within a building, will likely be due to one species: the "house mouse". No matter the species, you will certainly want to keep these animals out of the building. But, knowing a few differences between species may mean the difference between a safe, cost-effective, successful treatment and a recurring, potentially hazardous rodent infestation in your building.

IPM Methods for Mice

Here are some IPM measures that work to prevent rodent entry.

Remove Habitat

Mice require shelter, food and water. Do not plant gardens or other vegetation within 6-12 inches of the building's foundation where mice might live and easily wander into an opening in the building. Remove mulch, wood or leaf piles, and keep equipment, supplies and refuse as far from the building as practical. Look for and eliminate places where mice can avoid the weather and predators.

Proofing

Repair and seal access points. A mouse can fit through as little as a dime sized, ¼ inch wide opening. Seal cracks in building foundations and around openings around pipes and vents. Rodents are chewers and can gnaw through an amazing array of materials. Use heavy gauge sheet metal for flashing, durable door sweeps, escusion plates around pipes and concrete filler for foundation cracks.

Sanitation

Store food in durable sealed containers such as plastic or aluminum. Restrict food consumption to specific areas so cleanup can be done easily and immediately after eating. Keep recycle bins, trash cans and bird feeders as far from the building as possible.

Trapping

Once mouse signs are found inside the building, traps should be placed where signs of mice have been found: where feces pellets, food crumbs or gnawing marks are observed. Bait the traps with grains like cereal. Traps can be inexpensive, and can be of the type that snap the animal when it takes the food, or catches the mouse when it enters a live "Ketch-All™" type of trap. Since traps have pinchpoints and can injure small fingers, make sure to place traps where children will not be able to readily reach them.

Pesticides

Consider using pesticides only after the lower risk IPM methods fail to prevent or control a problem. The reasons for this include the fact that pesticides, unless reapplied, will likely not prevent future occasional invader pest problems. Depending on the level of infestation, pesticides can be complicated to use effectively. For example, some rodents are finicky eaters and will avoid pesticide baits that are placed in an incorrect location, or do not 'smell or look right' to them. When mice do not respond to baiting, even experienced pest management professions can find it difficult to solve the problem. There are also risks of harming non-target animals that might consume the pesticide bait though not intended for them.

Pesticide use is regulated by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection.

For questions about proper, legal pesticide use, contact WDATCP (608-224-4547) or visit our website at http://www.datcp.state.wi.us/arm/agriculture/pest-fert/pesticides/school_ipm.html.

Wisconsin Department of Agriculture,
Trade and Consumer Protection
Agriculture Resouce Management Division
P.O. Box 8911
Madison, WI 53708-8911
608-224-4500 IPM Program: 608-224-4547
ARM PUB 134 9/2003